

Teleconference Remarks to the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association

December 7, 1994

The President. Nice to hear your voice. Are you having a good meeting?

Lee Goldfarb. It's great, sir, and we're in the middle of it. And everybody is gung ho, waiting to do the right thing.

The President. Well, good for you. I thank you for the invitation to come down and address the banquet this evening. And I'm sorry I couldn't come, and I'm very grateful to have this brief chance to speak with you.

Let me begin by saying, on this very special day, that I and all Americans can never forget the services rendered and the sacrifices made by the members of your association. I cherish the occasions that I've had to meet with you and with other members of veterans service organizations, and especially the times that have meant the most to me are the times that we've gathered to honor your efforts in wartime. I look forward to participating in the World War II 50th anniversary commemorations next year.

It was a real honor for me, also, I want to say, to sign the National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day proclamation. I can't believe that it took us 53 years to issue the first one, but I'm very glad that we're doing it now.

One other point I wanted to make is that I really appreciate the fact that you, Lee, have sensitized me and the rest of Americans to the fact that we must always recognize the contributions not only of the naval personnel but of the non-Navy, non-Pearl Harbor people who often are slighted. And I'm glad that your association includes veterans who were stationed throughout the island of Oahu, and not just at Pearl Harbor.

All of you who survived Pearl Harbor, as I'm sure you must know, are a terrific inspiration to all Americans and a constant reminder that we must remain ever vigilant, that we must never again be unprepared. Just a few days ago, the Secretary of Defense and General Shalikashvili and I made a recommendation to beef up the defense budget in critical areas over the next 5 years to make sure that we maintain the strongest defense in the

world. And that is one of the lessons we have learned from your service and your sacrifice.

Today, let me say again, I join with all the American people in giving thanks to those who served at Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, and to all the other veterans of World War II for the priceless liberty you have helped us to secure. I thank you for your service in wartime, and I thank you for your continued citizenship and service to our country.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:52 a.m. by telephone from the Oval Office at the White House to the association meeting in Tampa, FL. Lee Goldfarb is president of the association.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 7, 1994

Thank you, John Betchkal, Mrs. Betchkal, Reverend León. I want to thank especially our wonderful entertainers tonight: Willard Scott, who would make anybody believe in Santa Claus; Trisha Yearwood, it's wonderful to see you again; Richard Leech, you are terrific. If I had a voice like you, I would have stayed out of politics. [Laughter] And I want to say a special word of thanks and congratulations to the magnificent Aretha Franklin who was recently honored at the Kennedy Center Honors. We are glad to see all of you here tonight. Thank you. We congratulate the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys for the wonderful job that they did.

Let me say that Hillary and Chelsea and I are delighted to be back here for our second Pageant of Peace. I don't know how many of you were here last year, but it was a lot colder. And I still feel in the Christmas spirit and more comfortable doing so. I'm glad to be here tonight, and I appreciate this wonderful weather.

This year, we have a lot to be grateful for. This is the first Christmas since the beginning of the cold war when our parents can tuck all of their children into bed on Christmas Eve knowing that there are no Russian missiles with nuclear warheads pointed at them.